1. AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS (LISTING OF CLAIMS):

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Previously Presented) A method for assessing skeletal growth of a subject other than a patient with severe heart disease or renal failure comprising measuring N-terminal pro-C-type natriuretic peptide (NT-CNP) in a biological fluid from the subject, and comparing this measured level of NT-CNP against a mean NT-CNP level from a sex- and age-matched control population for which at least a first skeletal growth information is known, wherein a significant deviation in the measured level of NT-CNP in the subject from the mean level of NT-CNP in the control population is indicative of abnormal skeletal growth, and further wherein said measuring step comprises detecting binding between NT-CNP and an antibody that selectively binds NT-CNP.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the biological fluid is plasma or whole blood.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, where said subject is a pre-adult.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said subject is a pre-pubescent child or an infant.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein said subject is a neonate and the fluid comprises cord blood.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said subject is undergoing a treatment regimen, which may impact on skeletal growth in said subject.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said subject is exposed to chemicals or other external factors which may impact on skeletal growth in said subject.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said antibody is an antibody fragment that selectively binds NT-CNP.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said antibody is a monoclonal antibody or a monoclonal antibody fragment.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the NT-CNP to which the antibody selectively binds comprises an antigenic peptide selected from the group consisting of proCNP(1-103), proCNP(1-50), proCNP(1-81), and proCNP(51-81).

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, wherein the NT-CNP comprises proCNP(1-50).

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~binding of NT-CNP is measured with antibodies or antibody fragments that are~~the antibody is immobilized to a solid phase.

14. (Previously Presented) A method for assessing skeletal growth potential of a subject other than a patient with severe heart disease or renal failure, comprising measuring N-terminal pro-C-type natriuretic peptide (NT-CNP) in a biological fluid from said subject, and comparing this measured level of NT-CNP against a mean NT-CNP level from a control sex- and age-matched population that has attained maximum skeletal growth and assessing from the NT-CNP level in the subject, whether the NT-CNP level is indicative of growth plate activity, so indicating that the subject is still growing, or whether the NT-

CNP level is indicative of epiphyseal fusion so indicating that the subject has stopped growing, wherein said measuring step comprises detecting binding between NT-CNP and an antibody that selectively binds NT-CNP.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Previously Presented) A method for diagnosing a skeletal disease or disorder in a subject other than a patient with severe heart disease or renal failure, comprising measuring N-terminal pro-C-type natriuretic peptide (NT-CNP) in a biological fluid from said subject, and comparing this measured level of NT-CNP against a mean NT-CNP level from a sex- and age-matched control population, wherein a significant deviation in the measured level from the mean control level is indicative of a skeletal disease or disorder, wherein said measuring step comprises detecting binding between NT-CNP and an antibody that selectively binds NT-CNP.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14 or claim 16, wherein said biological fluid is plasma or whole blood.

18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14 or claim 16, wherein said subject is a pre-adult.

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14 or claim 16, wherein said subject is a pre-pubescent child or an infant.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14 or claim 16, wherein said subject is a neonate and said biological fluid comprises cord blood.

21-22. (Canceled)

23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14 or claim 16, wherein said antibody ~~or~~

~~antibody fragment~~ is a monoclonal antibody or a monoclonal antibody fragment thereof.

24. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14 or claim 16, wherein the NT-CNP to which said antibody ~~or antibody fragment~~ selectively binds comprises an antigenic peptide selected from the group consisting of proCNP(1-103), proCNP(1-50), proCNP(1-81), and proCNP(51-81).

25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein said NT-CNP comprises proCNP(1-50).

26. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14 or claim 16, wherein ~~binding of said NT-CNP is measured with an~~the antibody ~~or antibody fragment that~~ is immobilized to a solid phase.

27. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[26]]16, wherein where a significant deviation from the mean control level is found in the fluid, the method comprises a further step of comparing the measured NT-CNP level with one or more mean NT-CNP levels from populations having known skeletal diseases or disorders to make a more accurate diagnosis of a specific disease or disorder.

28. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 27~~14 or claim 16~~, wherein said skeletal disease or disorder is selected from the group consisting of congenital disorders, delayed developmental disorders and advanced development syndromes.

29. (Previously Presented) A method of monitoring skeletal growth in a subject other than a patient with severe heart disease or renal failure comprising:

(a) measuring a level of N-terminal pro-C-type natriuretic peptide (NT-CNP) in a first biological fluid from said subject and measuring a level of NT-CNP in a second biological fluid, wherein said second biological fluid is taken from the same subject as

said first biological fluid but at a later date; and

(b) comparing the levels of NT-CNP in said first and said second biological fluids, wherein a significant difference in the levels of NT-CNP in said second biological fluid compared to the level of NT-CNP in said first biological fluid indicates a change in skeletal growth rate in said subject, wherein said measuring step comprises detecting binding between NT-CNP and an antibody that selectively binds NT-CNP.

30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, wherein said subject is undergoing a treatment regimen that may impact skeletal growth of said subject.

31. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6 or claim 30, wherein said treatment regimen involves administration of glucocorticoids to said subject.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 31, wherein said subject is undergoing treatment for asthma or other chronic allergic states.

33-43. (Canceled)

44. (Currently Amended) A method for assessing skeletal growth of a pre-adult subject other than a patient with severe heart disease or renal failure, comprising measuring N-terminal pro-C-type natriuretic peptide (NT-CNP) in a biological fluid from the subject, and comparing this measured level of NT-CNP against a mean NT-CNP level from a sex- and age-matched control population for which at least a first skeletal growth information is known, wherein a significant deviation in the measured level of NT-CNP in the subject from the mean level of NT-CNP in the control population is indicative of abnormal skeletal growth, wherein said measuring step comprises detecting binding between NT-CNP and an antibody, or an antibody fragment thereof, that selectively binds NT-CNP or an NT-proCNP peptide.

45-46. (Canceled)

47. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[46]]44, wherein said NT-proCNP peptide comprises an antigenic peptide selected from the group consisting of proCNP(1-103), proCNP(1-50), proCNP(1-81), and proCNP(51-81).

48. (Currently Amended) A method for assessing skeletal growth of a subject other than a patient with severe heart disease or renal failure suspected of having a skeletal disease or disorder, comprising measuring N-terminal pro-C-type natriuretic peptide (NT-CNP) in a biological fluid from the subject, and comparing this measured level of NT-CNP against a mean NT-CNP level from a sex- and age-matched control population for which at least a first skeletal growth information is known, wherein a significant deviation in the measured level of NT-CNP in the subject from the mean level of NT-CNP in the control population is indicative of abnormal skeletal growth in said subject, wherein said measuring step comprises detecting binding between NT-CNP and an antibody, or an antibody fragment thereof, that selectively binds NT-CNP or an NT-proCNP peptide.

49-50. (Canceled)

51. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[50]]48, wherein said NT-proCNP peptide comprises an antigenic peptide selected from the group consisting of proCNP(1-103), proCNP(1-50), proCNP(1-81), and proCNP(51-81).

Please add the following new claims:

52. (New) The method of claim 29, wherein said antibody is an antibody fragment that selectively binds NT-CNP or an NT-proCNP peptide.

53. (New) The method of claim 29, wherein said antibody is a monoclonal antibody or an antibody fragment thereof.